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AUTHOR Gonzalez, Ann
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ABSTRACT

As part of a communicative approach and to provide non-linguistic information to students, authentic videotape recordings were incorporated into the summer intensive Spanish course in the University of South Carolina's master's program in international business. Students were introduced to the tapes by first seeing segments without sound, both to illustrate what can be understood visually and to emphasize the need for selective perception. The second phase was viewing with sound, with or without concurrent exercises. Exercises were created with clear cues to students to pay attention to the video. Video recordings allowed for immediate replay for feedback. The final instructional stage included follow-up activities, the most effective of which were directly related to cultural issues or analysis of the video itself, such as selective use of diminutives in a family situation. Discussion of why students respond with embarrassment or laughter, appropriate or inappropriate, and of the film's possible biases were also found to be essential to understanding the film's content. Use of video was seen to enhance motivation and retention of cultural and linguistic material. Testing, not used in this course, will be incorporated in future courses. Handouts accompanying videos are appended. Contains 13 references. (MSE)

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VIDEO MATERIALS PRODUCTION AND USE IN INTENSIVE LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION: THE EXPERIENCE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA'S MASTER'S IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS PROGRAM

Ann Gonzalez
Foreign Languages and Literatures
University of South Carolina
Columbia, South Carolina 292208

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INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL RATIONALE

As part of last summer's intensive Spanish language training for students enrolled in the Masters in International Business Program at the University of South Carolina, authentic video material was incorporated on a consistent basis. We felt such a decision was in keeping with our overall communicative approach and that, in addition, videos would reinforce and recycle linguistic information that students were already manipulating. Because of my personal emphasis on teaching culture to language students in general and encouraging cultural sensitivity and awareness among international business students in particular, I felt that authentic videos would be an important source of non-linguistic information as well.

The initial decision to include video was based on the increasingly accepted premise that in a proficiency-based curriculum, authentic materials (AM) are more valuable for students than edited, simplified, or modified texts skewed to some particular grammatical point or function. As Villegas Rogers asserts "Effective use of AM in the foreign language classroom will put the students in direct contact with real linguistic and cultural situations not commonly

presented through regular teaching materials (1988:106). The arguments, in fact, for using authentic material and video, in particular, are so well documented and convincing that rather than ask why we should use AM, Richardson and Scinicariello claim that "those not using it should be asked why they have neglected this important aid to second language learning" (1989:44). Like any teaching tool, however, authentic video has no value, in and of itself, but rather acquires value through skillful use. In fact, video can be detrimental if unwisely selected and inadequately prepared and if several related assumptions about language acquistion are not taken into account (see Ariew in Smith 1988 for an overview of both the advantages and disadvantages of video use). Three particular points are important to recall in preparing authentic video materials.

First, the target language is more effectively acquired if students are able to lower their "affective filter" as Krashen (1981) calls it and permit linguistic information to enter and be assimilated by the brain. Second, a student's automatic abilities in selective perception do not carry over into the target language: he must relearn those skills. Third, verbal communication makes up only some 20 percent of communication; the rest is non-verbal and culturally derived (Gorden 1974:viii). This last notion actually entails some rather unorthodox ideas

about learning a second language. For language acquisition to be effective it must include a cultural context. As Galloway asserts: "to develop students' language skills and neglect a sense of cultural context in which the language is used may be simply to provide students with the illusion that they are communicating (1987:69). According to Gorden who studied Americans living in Colombia with Colombian families, those people who were "fluent in textbook Spanish left more frustrated Colombians in their wake than did Americans who spoke little or no Spanish" (1974:vii). That is, if a student has mastered linguistic skills, the native speaker assumes he has also mastered socio-linguistic subtleties. As Seelye explains: "we naturally expect someone who talks <u>as though</u> he knew how to act indeed to <u>act</u> accordingly" (in Gorden 1974:vii; italics his). What these findings imply is that speaking a foreign language well but having no grasp of cultural context can actually be a disadvantage in terms of overall communication.

I had previously incorporated videos in my teaching at the University of Costa Rica and already had some insight into what did and did not work. If students were not adequately prepared for a video, for example, they felt threatened. If videos were too long or too freuently used, the novelty wore off and students would become bored. If listening/viewing objectives were not clear and specific,

students would watch passively and language acquisition would be minimal. With these drawbacks in mind, I designed a component for our introductory MIBS program based on the experience that video materials, if used wisely, could be instrumental in helping students assimilate authentic material, practice skills in selective perception, and develop an awareness of cultural context.

METHODOLOGICAL APPLICATION

My first goal was to make sure students did not feel threatened by videos, to insist that they could understand much more than they expected, and to emphasize that most understanding is non-verbal anyway. One particular technique I used in this regard was to show students segments of film without sound. For example, the very first day of class they learned they could classify types of television programs from watching previews without sound. Another time they watched a mute segment from a "telenovela" and made fairly accurate guesses as to plot. They could tell the weather from the weather report, or the ingredients for a meal on a cooking show--all without sound. By showing students that they are able to understand much more than they think, we are able to enhance their self-confidence and contradict what Miele (1982) calls the social-suggestive norm, that is, those beliefs we unintentionally acquire

about foreign languages such as "foreign languages are difficult," "foreign languages are unpleasant," or "I'm not good at foreign languages" (also see Goldin 1987).

At the same time, watching a video without sound emphasizes the need for selective perception. We cannot, in our own language or in any other, hear and see everything without turning into Borges' Funes, El Memorioso. Selective perception works automatically in our language: we know what to listen for; we hear what is important and we let the rest go. Our brain may record it, but we cannot consciously recall or identify it. In the target language, however, we have no immediately recognizable clues to distinguish between what to pay attention to and what to let go. We try to see and hear everything. We concentrate more intensely and as a result we tire quickly or we shut off and become bored. To prevent students from blocking, I found it useful to follow Rick Altman's maxim of "simplify the task, not the text"(1989; also see Ariew in Smith 1988:55 for an opposing view). In this way, students know exactly what to listen for. For example, after studying vocabulary for family members, students listened to the same segment of soap opera they had seen earlier without sound and listened specifically for references to family relations. The directive as to what specifically to listen or watch for is a generally accepted principle for teachers working with

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authentic video material and would seem to be a fairly common sensical pedagogical approach in working with any authentic material. Students first need a clear introduction and pre-viewing activity before watching the video plus specific instructions about what to listen and watch for. Without this previewing phase, students will hear and see too much and be able to make sense out of virtually none of it.

The second pedagogical phase is the viewing itself. Several options are available; some techniques work better with certain films and objectives than others. Sometimes I had students view a segment while filling out an exercise, sometimes I paused the video at appropriate sections to allow students to record what they had heard. Sometimes they would watch through and then do an exercise and watch again to double check. No matter how we went about it, the important point was to create exercises with clear markers to clue students in on when to pay attention. Markers could be key words or phrases, a particular action or gesture, or my forced pauses. If students could hear or see the markers, they generally could identify or understand what preceded or followed. The kinds of exercises students do at this stage runs the gamut from True/False, multiple choice, cloze, short answer, matching, chart completion, etc. Generally we would watch the segment a second or third time to go over

responses. This way students had immediate feed back; if they had trouble at a particular spot, we could replay it, pause during it, and try to figure out why it was causing problems (e.g., unfamiliar accent or lexical item, inability to see the speaker's lips move, misinterpretation of a non-verbal sign, etc.).

The final pedagogical stage recommended for teaching anything is follow-up. Yet this step is the vaguest one outlined in video research. Some recommendations are to extract grammatical points or lexical items for further exercises (ACTFL workshop 1989), to ask more general comprehension questions (Richardson and Scinicariello 1989), to use the video as a point of departure for class, small group, or paired discussions, or writing assignments on the video topic (Villegas Rogers 1988), or as Mount, Mount and Toplin suggest, to integrate students' responses, allowing students themselves to "participate in the selection of themes for follow-up activities"(1988:153). Generally everyone seems to agree that some follow-up related to cultural differences is a good idea. My own experience working with the MIBS last summer, in fact, suggests that the **most** fruitful follow-up activities are those directly related to cultural issues and those related to an analysis of the video itself. For example, after the "telanovela" segment in which students listened for family relationships,

discussion followed on diminutives and their application to family terms: how the diminutive changes the cultural significance of "padre" to "padrecito" to "papito"; how "hermanilla" would be appropriate but "papillo" probably not; how "mama" means one thing and "su madre" something quite different (see Seelye 1984); how certain terms are country-specific--the word for papa in Costa Rica, for example, is "tata" and is commonly used in reference to God the Father, "Tatadios" or "Taticadios". For some students this last example is merely an interesting piece of trivia exemplifying lexical variations in Latin America, but for our MIBS students who will be doing their on-site language training in Costa Rica, it was important vocabulary information.

In regard to an analysis of the video itself, student response is important. If students laugh, for example, at inappropriate times, it is imperative to discuss why. Were stereotypes at issue? Were gestures, expressions, or sounds unexpected or embarrassing? Levels of expectation are significant. Even when students are told that they will see a "campesino" who will have a thick accent, they are still unprepared to see or hear him. They often will laugh, even if the campesino is speaking seriously about a serious topic. Obviously, their reaction is to be expected but it is nevertheless inappropriate and it is important that they

fully understand why they are laughing: much better to laugh inappropriately at a video, then at a live human being. Another important question students must learn to ask is whether the film has a hidden agenda? What is the narrator's bias and how do these issues affect our responses. These last issues begin to take on more importance as the students' linguistic level advances, but students should be made aware early on that the camera eye is never as objective as it seems.

Examples of follow-up materials are only limited by a teacher's individual experience. We all have geographical areas we are more familiar with than others because we have lived, visited, or traveled extensively in particular countries. Follow-up activities work best when a teacher draws on that experience both in selecting the videos he/she feels comfortable showing and in creating follow-up activities which take advantage of his/her personal expertise. Authenticity is the key here: not only the fact that we use authentic materials, but that we respond authentically as well.

CONCLUSIONS: STUDENT RESPONSE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Our experience proved to be successful and taught us what worked well. Student response based on end of term course evaluations was overwhelmingly positive and

demonstrated that video use was a key motivational factor in language learning as well as an aid to retention of linguistic and cultural material. While our MIBS students tend to be more integratively motivated (that is they have more of "a desire to be and act like speakers of the target language"(Goldin 1987:650; also see Jakobovits 1970) than our regular students, they commented that video made classes more interesting and was a welcome break from their concentration on grammar and production skills. They were also especially appreciative of the information on culture which we culled from the video segments. Since we coordinated videos on specific topics in the afternoon with similar topics being introduced and discussed in the morning sessions, we discovered that not only the vocabulary but also specific linguistic structures tended to repeat. This repetition, we felt, helped remove the artificial sense of learning a language in a classroom and permitted students the opportunity to respond authentically to an authentic text. Students also commented that videos were a way to measure their improvement, especially since we sometimes used the same video more than once, each time changing the objectives and the tasks. The key to successful video use, however, we found lay in the careful preparation of the accompanying previewing, viewing, and follow-up exercises. Not only were the exercises vital in preparing students for what they would see, in directing students as to what to

look for, and in stimulating students to recognize cultural contexts, they also gave a structure and an order to class. Our business students, we recognize, need to be sure that they are getting something for their money, and the careful preparation of the video component helped them feel secure in this often unvoiced sentiment. There was also an underlying message which students heard: we prepared; so should you.

One item I did not pursue in regard to the video component I designed last summer was testing. There were several reasons for this deletion. First, our MIBS students are heavily tested in the other components and under a great deal of pressure to perform well. Second, it was time consuming. Videos were only alloted about 45 minutes every other day. And third, I wanted students committed to watching and understanding, not to worrying about grades. In this sense, the exercises worked well. I do think, however, that testing is a vital pedagogical tool and does need to be incorporated in the future either in the form of actual on the spot comprehension or in terms of retention of cultural information.

We are now expanding our use of video with our MIBS students in a class focused primarily on cultural awareness. Since we have been fortunate enough to acquire tapes from Costa Rica on different aspects of Costa Rican life and

business from El Proyecto Chirripo, we have been able to intensify our focus on cultural/ideological differences and perspectives. We plan to continue our use of video this summer and incorporate some of these new films. While we are convinced that authentic videos enhance language acquisition and cultural awareness, we are also certain that the selection of videos which are relevant to a student's future plans to work in the language make all the difference between a successful and an unsuccessful program.

Ann Gonzalez, Ph.D.
Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures
University of South Carolina

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AWARENESS OF VISUAL CLUES IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

I. Introduction

A. We use more visual clues than we realize when attempting to understand a situation whether in our own language/culture or a different one.

B. Sometimes when we are confronted with a new language, we do not take advantage of visual stimuli to help us understand; we block everything because the sounds are strange.

C. You are about to see eight announcements of upcoming attractions on TELEMUNDO. Watch first without sound. You will probably be able to tell what kind of shows are being announced from visual clues alone.

II. Directions

A. Categorize each show in order of appearance by using the following checklist. Be careful. There is one choice too many.

ORDER OF APPEARANCE		TYPES OF SHOWS
1st Viewing	2nd viewing	
1.		A. sports
2.		B. public service announcement
3.		C. talk show
4.		D. soap opera
5.		E. movie
6.		F. domestic comedy
7.		G. news
8.		H. music show
		I. game show

B. Watch again with sound. Did you change any answers? Why? Based on what? Did you recognize any words?

C. List key words you thought you heard:

D. Now study the key vocabulary words and phrases:

líder de nuestra televisión	deportes
comedia	cine/película
noticias/noticiero	música
telenovela	entrevista

E. Listen and watch one more time. We will stop after each announcement to identify key vocabulary.

III. Follow-up

A. Visual clues can be confusing in another culture. Sometimes we recognize that something we see is important but we do not understand its significance in the new culture; sometimes we do not even notice something that may be important in our visual sphere because we do not expect to see it or we attach no significance to it; and sometimes we misinterpret a visual clue because in our culture it means one thing and in the new culture it means something else. Examples:

B. Body language varies from culture to culture. Part of language learning is to be able to handle language without words. Practice:

lleno/full of people	no
tacaño/stingy	uh oh!
caro/expensive	venga
así de alto (o chiquito)/ a person versus an animal	
delicioso	tonto
saludos (Costa Rican style)	
a few insults (for fun)	